

Washington, DC -- Congressman Vern Buchanan's (FL-13) bill to help small business passed the House today with unanimous support and now goes to the Senate for consideration. The bill, H.R. 1839 amends the Small Business Act to modernize the Small Business Administration's (SBA) counseling program. The SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives) program provides entrepreneurs with the small business advice of working and retired executive volunteers.

"Since 1964, SCORE has been providing entrepreneurs with free, confidential, and valuable small business advice," said Buchanan on the floor of the House. "With double digit unemployment rates, more people will be trying to start their own business. Their success is vital to our economic recovery. This bill will help ensure that qualified volunteers are available to provide one-on-one advice and counsel to small businesses."

Research shows that Small businesses are five times more likely to get off to a successful start if they get assistance from a government supported program such as SCORE. Currently, SCORE has 389 chapters in locations throughout the United States with 10,500 volunteers nationwide.

Manasota SCORE Chapter Chairwoman, Jeannette Watling-Mills said,

"SCORE fulfills a vital role for America's small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs by providing much needed technical assistance. Many small businesses continue to struggle with layoffs, access to capital, cash flow and overall management issues. SCORE has a proven track record of both creating and saving jobs by improving business survival rates as well as accelerating small business formation."

SCORE helps create nearly 20,000 new small businesses each year. In the past year, SCORE has assisted more than 523,000 people and conducted more than 322,000 counseling sessions.

Buchanan's bill authorizes \$7 million in each of Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011 for SCORE. It would require SCORE administrators to actively recruit and maintain volunteer mentors and track their success. Counselors would be required to have at least ten years of similar experience.